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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/FO, NEA/FO

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: FM TAKES CREDIT FOR "SOFTENED" LATAM-ARAB  
DECLARATION

1. In a burst of braggadocio, Ecuadorian Foreign Minister Patricio Zuquilanda informed the Ambassador March 31 that the "USG had me to thank" for watering down the inflammatory declaration that would emerge from the May 10-11 summit of South American and Arab state leaders. The original draft, which Zuquilanda and other chancellors debated days earlier in Morocco, was heavily anti-Israel and anti-U.S., the FM asserted. The revised declaration, while still wavering from the summit's initial intent -- promoting economic and cultural ties between blocs -- looked far more balanced.

2. Zuquilanda's office April 14 forwarded the Embassy a copy of the declaration, annotated "Rev. 11 Col.0213/(04/10)04-GA corr 11(0473)," which we in turn faxed to WHA and NEA front offices. Having not seen earlier versions, we cannot verify the FM's claim that this draft represents an improvement. Yet it does appear less problematic than the version Miami Herald analyst Andres Oppenheimer disparaged in a January 6 column. Oppenheimer wrote that Declaration Section 2.9 called for "a UN conference 'to study' terrorism and define the terrorist crime, distinguishing terrorism from the legitimate right of peoples to resist foreign occupation with a view to reach national independence."

3. The revised document still calls for a UN conference to define terrorism. The paragraph asserting the right to oppose occupying forces has been bracketed, however, perhaps for revision or removal. Further, Section 2.9 begins positively, "Emphasizing the importance of combating terrorism in all its forms and manifestations through active and efficient international cooperation" and concludes with a call for greater sharing of C-T information and expertise.

4. By no means do the United States and Israel get off easy. Anti-American digs include:

-- Reaffirming the necessity of resolving all conflicts non-violently;

-- Emphasizing the importance of respecting the unity, sovereignty, and independence of Iraq, and not interfering in its internal processes;

-- Committing to implementing all UN resolutions non-selectively;

-- Expressing profound worries over the unilateral sanctions the United States imposed on Syria;

-- Recognizing the need for protection of intellectual property, but not when it affects national development, especially in terms of national health policies;

-- Emphasizing the need to eliminate distortions (subsidies) in agriculture, which impede developed nations from exploiting comparative advantages;

-- Welcoming the recent entry into force of the Kyoto Agreement, and calling on the international community to better protect the global climate.

5. While "Israel" appears infrequently in the text, anti-Israeli sentiment abounds:

-- Reaffirming that Middle East security depends on the region being free of nuclear arms and other WMD;

-- Emphasizing the need that Israeli forces withdraw from Arab territories occupied since June 1967;

-- Strongly considering the opinions noted in the International Court of Justice's 2004 report on the "Legal Consequences of Constructing a Security Wall in Occupied Palestinian Territory."

6. (SBU) COMMENT: We leave to the experts to determine if this text betters past versions. On Zuquilanda's bombast that he saved the day, we won't be so hesitant with our opinions. Ecuador's foreign minister regularly claims he is Washington's best friend in the region, yet rarely backs word with deed. Similarly, we are hard-pressed to remember a pro-Palestinian or anti-Israeli motion MFA diplomats did not support. The bottom line? We doubt Zuquilanda left the

sidelines in Marrakech, but believe he saw in the revised  
declaration an opportunity to curry USG favor. END COMMENT.  
KENNEY